

Steal This Hook!

Death's Chilly Hand

By Doug Beyer



Heroes survive and even prosper amid the grim dangers found in the **Eberron** setting, but the bony hand of death is always behind them. In these adventure hooks, the player characters come closer than ever before to the Keeper's cold touch -- perhaps they may even shudder under a sense of their own mortality. Enjoy.

A Glimpse of the Mourned

A young lass in the city of Vulyar, Karrnath, contacts the heroes. She asks for help locating her father Eemarch, who left for the Mournland in a huff a week ago, with the stated intention of "speaking with Drogan." Drogan was her brother who died on the Day of Mourning, so she worries that her father is mad, or worse -- that some creature is posing as the spirit of her brother Drogan.

The PCs follow Eemarch's trail into the dead-gray mist and discover the ruins of a small military barracks that recently and hastily was boarded up from the inside. Within they find Eemarch emaciated and cowering in the corner. Pages from a Sovereign Host religious text plaster the interior walls of the barracks, perhaps as a protective gesture. Discarded nearby is a pair of dark-lensed goggles. What's happening here?

Eemarch brought a pair of magic death-goggles to the Mournland because he thought they would let him see and speak to the ghost of his fallen son Drogan, but they worked a little too well. Eemarch saw so many tormented Mournland souls surrounding him when he strapped on the goggles that he went off the deep end and couldn't return home. Has Eemarch accidentally helped uncover part of the mystery of the Mournland -- and should the heroes follow up on the mystery? What other secrets of death can the PCs uncover with the goggles -- and who or what will rise up to stop them? Can Eemarch find Drogan, or has one of the Lords of Dust tricked him?

The Coffin Vault

In Xen'drik, the heroes discover the entrance to a dungeon, or so they may think. The entrance actually serves as a coffin for a famous giant that has been dead since the end of the Dragon-Fiend Wars. Perhaps tomb-looters recently pried open the entrance, or perhaps the PCs find it occupied by a cult of savage giants dedicated to the worship of their mighty forerunner. Elaborate traps wait for hapless beings in some areas of the dungeon, and cave-dwelling predators guard the vault as their adopted territory. What's more, the ancient giant was steps from attaining lichhood, and now his soul twists in agony in a half-completed necromantic ritual that has been unfinished for millennia. Perhaps the PCs help the giant by severing the strands connecting him to his bygone life, or perhaps the spilling of their blood by the resident giant cultists triggers the completion of the ritual.

Endeavors of the Dead Ancestor

In Valenar, two high-ranking Keepers of the Past {{/default.asp?x=dnd/ebds/20041011a}}, a cleric named

Quavion, and a bard called Jalanthe, share the same patron ancestor, Luchan. Each strive to outdo the other in becoming the ultimate avatar of their ancestor. In fact, Quavion and Jalanthe have dedicated their lives to researching Luchan's deeds and accomplishments. Jalanthe has a breakthrough when she discovers evidence that Luchan had a secret laboratory in the jungles of Aerenal, and she contacts the adventurers to accompany her on an expedition there. Quavion, meanwhile, hires his own expedition to beat her there, and the race is on. When the heroes' party arrives, they find some kind of dormant magical mechanism in Luchan's lab. Was Luchan close to activating an eldritch machine? Or was it finished but spent: a weapon used to fend off draconic attacks thousands of years ago? What will the PCs do when Quavion and Jalanthe, blinded by their need for attention from a dead ancestor, compete to reactivate the device?

The Halfling's Bargain

Babbin Olek is being watched. The old halfling thinks he's being stalked -- he sees a dark figure behind him as he goes about plying his jewelry trade in the city. Who is it? A pickpocket? A madman with an obsession for Olek's family? A gangster who feels he has business "protecting" the halfling's jewel stock?

The adventurers, hired by Olek to investigate the stalker, may discover that the truth is even grimmer. What Olek really thinks is that the dark figure haunting him may be someone who has learned of his bargain with a dark power -- a bargain that supposedly extended Olek's life. In fact, he thinks it might even be the Keeper personified. Babbin Olek is almost three hundred, which is over a century older than his race should live. However, his appearance is that of a mere 120-year-old. Olek's end of the bargain is that he sets a high-quality dragonshard under his pillow every year on his birthday, and it disappears when he rises in the morning. Olek's dragonshard supply is replenished by Olek's contacts in the gem trade, but the shards have apparently stopped doing the trick, because the halfling is beginning to show his age.

Who is stalking Olek? If it is someone who seeks his death, can the PCs help Olek at all? If not, who tricked an old man into believing this charade about Death ninety-nine years ago -- and is the same party responsible today? If the Keeper isn't behind it, how do the PCs account for Olek's unnatural lifespan? And where have all those dragonshards gone?

Dolurrr Slippage

Although Dolurrr is coterminous, a cleric of the Silver Flame attempts to use *raise dead* on an important fallen comrade. The divine energies of the spell attract a host of spirits from the coterminous plane of the dead, and the cleric accidentally instills the body with the wrong soul. Now the body of a hierarch of the Church of Silver Flame is possessed with the soul of -- someone. Could it be that of a shifter girl who died in her youth? Of a bored and bitter Sharn housewife and cart-accident victim? What if it's the soul of a vengeful Cultist of the Dragon Below slain by fire during a Silver Flame crusade? Or the soul of a warforged soldier who met the wrong end of an enemy wizard's *lightning bolt*? Or the soul of an infant who died at the age of two weeks? Or the soul of a worldly former Kech Shaarat general from Darguun? Or perhaps the sixty-thousand-year-old soul of an elf sorcerer who has intentionally maneuvered his way from Dolurrr into this important modern body. What will happen? How will the PCs get involved? What becomes of the hierarch's real soul? It's your campaign -- this is just the hook. . . .

Mini-Hooks

- When a rich necromancer moves into his new mansion complete with graveyard, he asks the PCs to defeat the *hallow* spell that prevents him from creating undead there.

- One of the heroes is contacted by someone claiming to be a planar traveler stuck in Dolurrh.
- Undead mind flayers twist the psychic energies surrounding a small village cemetery.
- An aging painter preoccupied with her mortality turns to a necromancer to provide a new type of canvas for her paints.
- During a school play about an old fable of the Keeper, a schoolboy goes missing -- and investigators find a bloody scythe nearby.
- A rash of suicides prompts a Sharn journalist to investigate -- and then the journalist kills himself, too.
- A powerful mage born two thousand years ago has been cheating death by combining the *clone* spell with repeated violent deaths -- she could be a villain hatching a millennial master plan or a wise sage spanning Eberron's history.

About the Author

Doug Beyer spent a lot of time getting philosophy degrees until he figured out that he should just move to Seattle and become a web developer for Wizards of the Coast. Now he spends his days working on games and his evenings playing them. Doug uses the time normally allotted for sleeping to lurk on the Wizards.com message boards as his alter ego, WotC_Doog.

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